



Public Forum 2: Vision & Framework for the Future

Responses to Questionnaire

1. Do you agree with the Draft Vision Statement?

Central		East		West		Total
Rating	Total	Rating	Total	Rating	Total	
1 Strongly Disagree	5	1 Strongly Disagree	0	1 Strongly Disagree	1	6
2	3	2	2	2	1	6
3	20	3	6	3	3	29
4	32	4	23	4	2	57
5 Strongly Agree	16	5 Strongly Agree	27	5 Strongly Agree	9	52
No response	3	No response	0	No response	3	6
Total	79	Total	58	Total	19	156

2. *Protecting Natural & Agricultural Resources*

Preserving farming and natural resources has been identified as a high priority by Union County's citizens and officials. Do you agree strongly with restricting new development in rural areas to protect these resources as recommended by the preferred growth management option?

Central		East		West		Total
Rating	Total	Rating	Total	Rating	Total	
1 Strongly Disagree	2	1 Strongly Disagree	1	1 Strongly Disagree	0	3
2	5	2	0	2	1	6
3	4	3	2	3	1	7
4	19	4	12	4	1	32
5 Strongly Agree	47	5 Strongly Agree	43	5 Strongly Agree	15	105
No response	2	No response	0	No response	1	3
Total	79	Total	58	Total	19	156

3. *Promoting a Town & Country Lifestyle*

The preferred growth management option directs new development in and around Union County's existing towns and villages. Do you agree with this direction for growth in Union County?

Central		East		West		Total
Rating	Total	Rating	Total	Rating	Total	
1 Strongly Disagree	6	1 Strongly Disagree	1	1 Strongly Disagree	0	7
2	3	2	0	2	2	5
3	6	3	2	3	0	8
4	25	4	10	4	3	38
5 Strongly Agree	37	5 Strongly Agree	44	5 Strongly Agree	13	94
No response	2	No response	1	No response	1	4
Total	79	Total	58	Total	19	156

4. *Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth*

The preferred growth management option recommends reinvesting in the County's towns, villages and commercial centers to support successful business and job growth. Do you agree with this policy?

Central		East		West		Total
Rating	Total	Rating	Total	Rating	Total	
1 Strongly Disagree	5	1 Strongly Disagree	1	1 Strongly Disagree	0	6
2	2	2	0	2	0	2
3	11	3	3	3	1	15
4	20	4	15	4	5	40
5 Strongly Agree	37	5 Strongly Agree	37	5 Strongly Agree	11	85
No response	4	No response	2	No response	2	8
Total	79	Total	58	Total	19	156

Summary

Four questions comprised the questionnaire distributed at Public Forums on March 11 and 12, 2008, during which participants were asked to respond using a ranking system of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The forums were held in the central, eastern, and western planning regions of the County and attracted nearly 250 people.

In addition to 156 completed surveys, verbal comments from the large number of Mennonites in attendance provided significant feedback on the draft Vision Statement and the recommended growth management framework.

An analysis of the responses indicates significant consensus countywide in favor of the Draft Vision Statement, restricting new development in rural areas, directing new development in and around existing towns, and reinvesting in the County's towns, villages, and commercial centers to support business and job growth.

In response to Questions 2, 3, and 4, the majority of each region and the county as a whole "Strongly Agreed" with the questions posed. Question 1, which pertained to the draft of the Vision Statement, is the only question with which the majority of attendees did not "strongly agree" although they did respond positively, giving it a countywide ranking of 4.

Summary of Comments

1. Do you agree with the Draft Vision Statement?

- Several comments expressed concern that a "unified" county should not have three distinct regions and wanted to be sure that a unified approach be applied.
- A few comments expressed concern over concentrating the retail economy in the eastern region to the detriment of retail endeavors in other townships, particularly Mifflinsburg and the central region.
 - "One exception - concentrating the retail economy in the eastern region is extremely detrimental to retail endeavors in other townships (Mifflinburg). Route 45 is a main thoroughfare so I would object to this wording as an assumption that resources and support should be focused only to one region."
 - "If Hartleton, Mifflinburg, New Berlin and Vicksburg had more of the daily and weekly necessities, shopping trips to the big box stores could be cut down and gas monies saved. Plus more money in our OWN Neighborhoods."
- Several comments expressed the desire for guidelines and/or regulations to prevent new building without considering the reuse of vacant properties first.

- Many called for environmental stewardship, energy conservation, green building, green roofs, rain gardens, trails, etc.
- “Disagree that tighter lot size would help the environment, would do the opposite.”
- “Promoting AND MAINTAINING town and country lifestyle.”
- “1st region should read...a home for agricultural enterprise...not rural enterprise.”
- “Add protection of ‘cultural resources’ as well as natural to statement.”
- “Put in a provision for saving the existing rail line.”
- “Address high-density farming, which is NOT sustainable agriculture.”
- “Would rather a 90/10 be established for growth.”
- “We have to realize that the draft vision makes everyone a "winner" over time. The quality of life that is so attractive will result in county population growth; but growth could diminish that quality of life if we do not grow in a "smart" way. The draft vision statement is an excellent step towards ‘smart growth.’”

2. Do you agree strongly with restricting new development in rural areas to protect these resources as recommended by the preferred growth management option?

- Many comments called for effective zoning to direct growth to developed areas and preserve agricultural and forest land.
- Several comments called for the protection of agricultural lands through Land Trusts, conservation easements, beneficial tax laws, and incentives for farmers not to sell their land.
- There is great interest in organic farming/sustainable farming practices.
- Several comments requested an emphasis on and understanding of specific farm issues such as the need for flexibility and space to operate, assistance to preserve family farms, doing away with factory farms, etc.
- “Is it possible for you to articulate to the citizens what the options are and the pros and cons of each option so we can make an informed decision? For me, preserving farmland

includes NOT stripping the land of nutrients by either over-fertilizing or over farming. Can we promote organic farming methods and reduce/eliminate factory farming?"

- "Farmland preservation but an effort must also be made to preserve farmers and make farming more economically viable, perhaps by better ways to shorten the food chain from the farmer to the consumer."
- "There must be compensation to land owners whose property values are reduced by zoning. There should be flexibility to allow farmers to expand their operations 'by the timely sales to developments.'"
- "The stronger the better."

3. The preferred growth management option directs new development in and around Union County's existing towns and villages. Do you agree with this direction for growth in Union County?

- Many comments urge consideration of the impact of development in and near existing towns on water drainage, increased flooding, soil retention, water quality, etc.
 - "Note: Recent developments (past 5 years) adjacent to existing developed areas have neglected the impact on the water table and have not allowed or planned for pedestrian and/or bike access."
- There is a significant call for reuse: "I think we should encourage builders and businesses to locate in the towns and make it advantageous to rehab old buildings or reuse empty or abandoned buildings rather than building new residential or commercial development."
- While many support directing new development towards existing towns, they also cite the need for transportation alternatives and connectivity including bike paths and pedestrian walkways.
- "If this direction is pursued and denser housing options are the goal, how can we be assured there is a market for townhouses, apartments vs. single family homes on larger parcels?"
- "I think that each region should be self-sufficient with the basic needs so that if one lives in the western part of the County, one wouldn't have to drive to the eastern area i.e. for banking."
- "I support it but it should be very restricted to conserve as much land as possible."

- “As long as it isn't 100% restrictive, meaning not completely limited to only the towns and villages. Maybe 80-85% in the towns and villages. Also 1/4 acre lost are awfully small. Can it work with 1/2 acre lots?”
4. The preferred growth management option recommends reinvesting in the County's towns, villages and commercial centers to support successful business and job growth. Do you agree with this policy?
- Several comments cite the need for enhanced transportation alternatives to support the reinvestment.
 - Several comments request businesses to support farms with 2 to 3 workers and agricultural-based small enterprises.
 - Several comments suggest opportunities to reuse/redevelop vacant properties and previously developed sites.
 - “I guess so. I would like to hear more specifically what this means and to be asked again.”
 - “As long as the town and commercial centers remain feasible for lower cost of living opportunities as opposed to higher.”
 - Many suggest the need to support small businesses and cottage industries.
 - “Support needs to go to the numerous "mom and pop" businesses and individual entrepreneurs NOT big business and industry. We don't need to give our money away to already wealthy corporations when we could just as easily make our local small businesses more successful.”
 - “We should also be encouraging profitable natural resource-based economic businesses. This could be for energy resources (biodiesel etc.). Profitable rural enterprises encourage rural preservation.”
 - “We need to bring in clean industry to replace job loss in the area - what's happening with Great Stream Commons?”
 - “Who is reinvesting, will we compound our cost by rushing to add services or will we reduce our shared costs and really build quality of life and maximize all of our original investments?”

Additional Comments

Among the many additional comments were many that echoed the thoughts below:

- “Still concerned about transportation.”
- “Transportation – need frequent, good, reliable, inexpensive.”
- “The rail to trail idea for the railroad track could cut down on the precarious buggy and bike traffic on 45 and 192.”
- “Rail trail from Lewisburg to needs to happen ASAP.”
- Many comments advocate building reuse and redeveloping previously developed sites as well as recycling. “Recycling can apply to empty spaces, buildings, materials, housing, schools.”
- Many comments also call for a sustainable approach – creating incentives for green building, establishing green corridors, encouraging sustainable farming practices.
- “If farmland is in a possible growth area, will it be considered for land preservation in the future?”
- “We need to look for industrial pads closer to the 15/I-80 interchange. Current industrial park provides more economic benefit to Lycoming County than Union.”
- “One of the most important aspects of this vision is the opportunity for activities that are environmentally-friendly – bike and walking trails to eliminate excess vehicle use and to promote healthier lifestyles. Sustainability is essential.”
- “Let's makes sure that farmers can continue to afford to grow and expand by the smart use of their land.”
- “We need to encourage the promotion of local agricultural production – we should be putting food in our local institutions i.e. schools, hospitals, and prisons.”
- “The public needs EDUCATION so people understand the concept of concentrated people – might use "testimonials" from people living side by side in downtown Lewisburg.”
- “Have an environmental committee that meets regularly within the County.”
- “Consider rezoning Lochiel for small business.”

- “Is there any THOUGHT about growth in the manufacturing area? It seems that Union County used to have manufacturing plants that are now closed. Are we to be a service/ agricultural based county?”
- “Let’s loosen some of these strong setback restrictions on family farms where they can't expand and be self supportive.”
- “Please change farm building setbacks from 1000 ft to a sensible number.”
- “Overall I like the plan, it's the implementation that scares me. There will need to be substantial economic benefits to make this plan work. Let's makes sure that farmers can continue to afford to grow and expand by the smart use of their land.”
- “I'm very concerned the factory farms be eliminated or frozen. They are not rural they are industry and high density.”
- “Why not at least consider a "new Town" up in White Deer Township at the I80 interchange? Mixed feelings about it but it should at least be considered. Perhaps as a more significant expansion of New Columbia.”
- “Build more homes in woodland areas – preserve farmland.”
- “In order to eliminate friction between agricultural endeavors and town or city living, sustainable agriculture needs to be focused on no commercial animal facilities, because this is where the problem lies. People want to see traditional farms not acreage destroyed by massive buildings that produce an impervious surface and change the landscape.”
- “More people means more schools, more taxes and no help for those people on fixed income.”
- “I agree with the five points from the first public forum totally. The questions must be "how" to achieve the sustainability criteria. We can agree in the criteria but have conflicts in the methods to achieve them.”
- “Definitely on the right track - could you be even more restrictive about growth outside of the town areas?”
- “Recent developments have clear cut the land. Ordinances should require leaving plant life to prevent stormwater runoff problems, allow trees to balance air, hold soil in place.”

- “I strongly oppose any major improvements in the transportation system. ‘If you build it they will come’ and put even more pressure on future growth. We must invest in an efficient bus or train transportation.”